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BUILDING COMMISSIONING

for better public buildings

CASE STUDY



Ada County Courthouse. Boise, ID.

THE VERDICT IS IN ON ADA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Ada County officials faced a difficult decision regarding their courthouse. The 60-year-old facility had problems—life safety code issues, inadequate heating and cooling systems, an outdated electrical system, and an inadequate amount of space to meet the County’s needs. And the jury was out on how to resolve them.

County officials got the voter approval they needed to build a new facility. Construction on the new 330,000-square-foot facility began in 2000. The County took occupancy in January 2002 of the five-story multi-use facility that contains courtrooms, assembly and hearing rooms, secure holding areas, administrative space, as well as retail stores and underground parking.

To ensure that the new facility met their future needs, Ada County officials looked to the commissioning process as both a quality assurance measure and as a way to keep the project on schedule.

Commissioning at the Ada County Courthouse followed a common course that reveals both the adaptability and value of the process. Although the County decided to commission the project late in the design phase and after the design documents were nearly complete, the commissioning provider and the design-build firm worked together to accommodate the commissioning requirements.

BUILDING COMMISSIONING

Is a systematic and documented process of ensuring that the owner's operational needs are met, building systems perform efficiently, and building operators are properly trained.

“Because court dates are determined up to a year in advance, we needed our building up and operational on Day One. We saw commissioning as a tool to get us what we wanted when we wanted it.”

- Dave Logan, Ada County

COMMISSIONING QUICK FACTS

Building: Ada County Courthouse

Location: Boise, Idaho

Completion date: January 2002

Scope of project: New construction

Commissioning cost: \$220,000¹

First-year cost benefit: \$106,590²

Annual energy savings: \$25,500³

¹ Commissioning providers fee only.

² Cost reduction or avoidance.

³ Annual energy savings based on cost of electricity of \$0.0494/kWh and natural gas of \$0.755 /therm.

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*This is one in a series of case studies on commissioning.
To review other case studies go to www.betterbricks.com/commissioning.*

A Commissioning Coordination Plan was developed specifying each party's responsibilities. The County's facility staff played a major role on the commissioning team and took on many of the commissioning responsibilities often reserved for the installation contractor. The commissioning provider also developed an integrated training plan for facility staff that included specific training objectives and key items for each piece of equipment.

Throughout the commissioning process and upon completion, Ada County realized the benefits of commissioning extended well beyond cost savings. Commissioning provided the County with an integrated training schedule for operations and maintenance staff and ensured that the facility was completed and fully operational on time.

The verdict is in on the Courthouse. Thanks to commissioning, Ada County and its taxpayers won.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Begin commissioning early on in the design phase.
- Use the commissioning plan to establish communication channels.
- Include all parties involved with the project in the commissioning planning.



Dave Logan inspecting the geothermal heating system.

COMMISSIONING BENEFITS

- Provided the building O&M staff with an integrated training schedule
- Increased occupant comfort
- Reduced operational deficiencies
- Avoided change orders
- Few start-up problems

"Commissioning helped us move in on time and more importantly, once we got here our building performed as it was intended to perform."

- Dave Logan, Ada County

PROJECT PARTNERS

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